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6114 Ramshorn Place
McLean, Virginia 22101
September 20, 1969

Dr. Joshua Lederberg,
c/o The Washington Post,
1515 L Street N.W.,
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Dr. Lederberg:

I read with a good deal of interest your column in today's Washington Post entitled: The Moral Issue of Science is the Lack of a Science of Peace. As a former member of the Army Human Factors Research Advisory Committee, I have been interested in a related field of research and in a position to observe much of what is being done in that field. The committee reviewed the ongoing research and recommended the new research to be undertaken by Army research contractors such as HumRRO, CRESS and various individual research organizations. Without detracting from the valuable work that many of these researchers were doing, I have long felt that we were dabbling in the details without many basic synthesizing theories.

One of the things that has struck me solidly is the negativeness of our definition of peace. We define it, in effect, as an absence, a vacuum, an imposed constraint on volatile forces. The last is more or less the definition of an unexploded bomb. You may check these definitions out in almost any dictionary. A few recent writings appear to be fumbling for a more positive concept.

As you know from your own scientific work, a vacuum or negative condition is one of the most difficult to obtain and maintain in the physical world. Forces press in upon it from all sides. What we have called peace has more or less demonstrated the same characteristics.

For my own purposes, I have tended to define peace as the presence of cooperation toward mutually advantageous goals rather than as the absence of conflict. I have found this a very useful insight in smaller situations in my own work. It is relatively easy to enlist others by jointly defining mutually desired conditions. It is hard to get others to "fight a fire" unless it is raging and is visibly threatening them or something they value. It is hardest of all to get action to prevent a problem when it is in an incipient stage. It is never easy, of course, to get past the first barriers and to get a strong opponent to talk.

To me, the average pacifist does not make sense. He wants his cake without baking it. He wants to achieve a vacuum by fiat or confrontation in the manner of the witch doctor or alchemist. He refuses to help to contain actual fires until they can be reduced. He wants to achieve an ideal condition by what amounts to magic or wish fulfillment rather than to engage in the hard, skilled labor that is needed to construct positive values.

If you are looking for a science of peace, you might well begin with a more positive definition than we now have of the results and conditions to be achieved. With such a definition, many of the loose ends may well begin to fall into place.

This letter, of course, merely sketches the problem. There are other interesting pieces that tend to flesh it out. I would enjoy discussing them with you at some convenient time when you are in Washington.

Sincerely,

Hugh H. Pease